

The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, October 27. 1691.

We have received several Questions about Vegetables, which we have thought fit to Answer all together, viz.

Quest. 1. **W**hat is the Use of the Jūlus that falls from Walnut-trees in May?

Ans. 'Tis not the Semen Essentiale, but Nodus Generationis; that is, (as far as we can yet distinguish) not the Seminal part of Generation, but rather of Augmentation, being alwayes near a Division of Branches; but our Search in this Point is not at all determinative, having resolv'd to refer our positive Answer 'till the Next Spring, when we shall make more particular Remarks about it.

Quest. 2. Does the Sap ever descend in Trees?

Ans. We think we may be very positive in the Negative, for several Reasons; particularly that Observation we have made in all Bodies that preserve their Essence by suction or reparation. Suppose we ask the same Question about the Hairs of our Head, the Answer is plain, that so long as there is Nutrition, there is Augmentation, but never no receding to the Radix: 'Tis so in all Animal Bodies which subsist by New Attractions, and not by any intrinsic Power in themselves; as for instance, a Person starv'd to death, which comes near the Instance of declining Trees in Winter; the radical Moisture that is preserv'd by the last Supply of Nourishment returns not again into Bread, Meat, Drink, but exerts its Power so long as the spirituous part is able to sustain the Offices of Motion; and so it is in Trees, whose Sap never descends, but exerts its Power either in Increase or Germination, or supplying the Defects in Nature, and when that Vigour is spent, the whole Nature of the Tree languishes, 'till reliev'd by fresh Nutrition the next Spring. — We had another Question, by another hand, about the different fructifications of Trees. — to which we Answer, That one and the same Trunk will give Nutriment to Apples, Pears, and all sorts of Fruits that have Pippins in 'em, but not to stoned Fruit, as Plumbs, Apricocks, &c. which are of a different Species; this we have experienced.

Quest. 3. Is there a Male and Female in Trees?

Ans. Ha, ha, ha! Differences in Soyl cause differences in Species, but not in Vegetatives.

Quest. 4. Whether cutting off the bottom Root in Planting of Trees (as is usual) does not more hurt than good?

Ans. No, the nearer any thing is to individuation, the nearer it comes to the Nature of immaterial Beings, and by consequence is the more perfect; as for instance, a long Sucker acts not only to maintain it self but the whole Trunk for which it acts, but a short Sucker saves so much for the Nourishment of the Trunk as it spares, compar'd to a longer.

Quest. 5. Whether the Variegation in Plants, as Holly, Philarchea, Myrtle, &c. be a Defect or Virtue in Nature?

Ans. A Vertue certainly, as different wayes of working in one and the same Power is a Vertue; only this is certain, that the best Colours argue the greatest Perfection, amongst which perhaps Green is the best, and most Noble of all Colours in the Universe.

Quest. 6. What is the Use of Oak-Apples?

Ans. The same as Warts, Corns, Moles, &c. which are Excrescencies or Defects in Nature.

Quest. 7. Your Thoughts about the Nature of Blights?

Ans. Some Countreys call it Blasting; 'tis an Effect of such Winds as are brought from the most Nitrous Climates.

Quest. 8. In the First Volume of your Athenian Mercury, Numb. 2. Qu. 13. I find you have seen a Quarry, or a Rock of Stone broken asunder for building, and in a solid place of it there lay a Toad, with just room enough for her body, and no more, — I desire to know how the Toad came there?

Ans. 'Tis very probable that falling into some Chink where she cou'd not get out, the Rock might close upon her by degrees, as it grew: Thus Keyes, Stones, and other things, have been form'd in the Veins of Mines, which as the Mines encreas'd, were enclos'd, for Rocks, Mines, &c. do thrive and encrease in the ground, as well as Trees, &c. above it.

Quest. 9. Whether do Bells on the Harness of a Horse chear the Horse, since 'tis suppos'd that Beasts cannot distinguish of Harmony or Musical sound?

Ans. Pliny (as I take it) has observ'd that all Beasts but the As are concern'd at Musick: That it delights some, is certainly true, by daily experience; and that it terrifies others we want not Instances; I knew one, who when all his Company had left him to run away from a Mad Bull, fell a playing upon a Base Viol just as the Bull was got up to him, upon which the Bull set up his Tail, and ran away. Some we read of that have play'd away Bears, &c. but as to this present Instance we are satisfy'd, that Carriers use not Bells on their Horses Necks to chear 'em, so much as to lead the rest of the Company, for all but their Leading-Horse are without: But that a Horse can distinguish Musick is plain, as those that get their livings by Dancing-Horses can sufficiently inform you.

Quest. 10. Whence comes a Checquer to be the Common Sign of an Ale-house?

Ans. What is the certain Reason, we our selves wou'd fain know, if a little searching into Chronicles wou'd inform us, but too much labour spent about it, won't be countervail'd by the Use and Interest of such a Discovery.

Quest. 11. What Pretence has the Pope to a Triple Crown?

Ans. Some say to act the Offices of the whole Trinity, and 'tis as reasonable as to make Effigies of 'em; but since there's no good Reason to be given, we may Answer it by asking other Questions — Why does he use fraud and force to obtain the Name of Universal Bishop — when Rome was once a private Bishoprick. Why does that Church pretend that we owe our Conversion to 'em, when Lucius was hundreds of Years before, a Christian King here; and why a thousand more Impostures?

Quest. 12. Whether 'tis lawful to Swear?

Ans. Our querist seems mightily dissatisfy'd in our affirmative Answer, and musters some of the Fathers to prove nothing: To what we have said before, we add — That if it had been an ill thing, God wou'd never have sworn by himself — That our Saviour by saying, Swear not at all, only meant in Common Discourse, because a frequent Use wou'd grow into a Custom of taking God's Name in Vain, that is, (mostly) by speaking of it without Reverence, or thinking of what we say. — And to put all out of doubt, 'tis said in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Men verily Swear (or do Swear) by the Greater, and an Oath for Confirmation is unto 'em an end of all strife: 'Tis spoken in the Present Tense, do Swear, not have sworn, as an old Obsolete or Antiquated Custom; and this was the Custom after our Saviours Command of Swear not.

Quest. 13. What Reason can be given, why the Name of GOD is not once mentioned throughout all the Book of Esther?

Ans. This Question was some time since Proposed, but we must ingeniously acknowledge we were not 'till very lately provided of any satisfactory Answer: But now we think we have found one, where we little expected it, namely, in Consulting Authors on the late difficulty concerning the Creation of the World, where we accidentally lit upon this Passage out of A Ben Ezra's Commentaries thereon, — "The old Samaritan Pentateuch, says he, here reads — In principio creavit Asima, &c. "In the beginning Asima Created the Heavens and the Earth. Now this Asima, or as we read it, Ashima, was the God or Idol of the Hamathites, some of those People who were brought up by the King of Assyria, and planted

in the Region of *Samaria*; when *Israel* were carried away Captive, — as we read 2 Kings 17. 30. And the Men of *Hamath* made *Asima*; who having been destroyed by *Lyons* for not worshipping the true God, an old Priest was sent back from *Babylon* to *Samaria* to teach 'em how to do it, who 'tis probable brought a Copy of the *Pentateuch* with him — But they fearing the Lord, and serving their Idols, as 'tis there express'd, mixt their *Worships* together, and made a *Mungril-sort* of Religion, its probable corrupting the *Holy Books*, as has been usual for *Hereticks* and *Misbelievers*, and inserting the Names of their Idols instead of the true God. — "*Nomen Idoli pro Elobim*, as *A. E.* goes on, which least the *Persians* shou'd also do in *Megella*, (so they call the Book of *Hester*) *Mordecai*, whom he supposes to be the Author of it (and indeed 'tis said in the History, that these Matters were written in a Book, and that *Esther* and *Mordecai* wrote with all Authority) that he did studiously and industriously abstain from the Name of God throughout all this Book, which was to go abroad among the *Heathens*, Subjects of *Ahashuerus*, lest they shou'd serve it as their Countrey-men the *Hamathites* had before done, and soist in some of their own Idols in the room on't. And indeed to observe the whole History, we shall find in some places so fair Occasion for mentioning the Name of God, that unless it had been designedly avoided, one can hardly tell how it shou'd be there omitted — For in the Account of the *Jews* Behaviour under their Apprehensions of a speedy and general *Massacre*, we find described their *Fasting* and *lying in Sackcloth and Ashes*: We find *Mordecai's* Discourse and dependance upon Providence for the Deliverance of his Countrey-men the *Jews*, and we find that *Queen Esther* order'd all the *Jews* of *Shushan* to Fast, and Promis'd she and her Court wou'd do the same; and yet in all this, tho' here's so fair an Occasion as well as afterwards in the Account of their *Deliverance* and *Thanksgiving*, though these are all religious Concerns, and though 'twas difficult to describe a *Fast*, a *Thanksgiving* and a *Providence* without mentioning a *God*, yet we find the word not so much as once here used. — For which, if any can assign a more probable Reason than what we have here produced, we shall own our selves extremely Oblig'd to 'em for their Information. — But here we are aware of one grand Objection which will go near to shake the strength of all this Hypothesis, if it be not foreseen and avoided. That great Man who had the Care of compiling and adorning our *English Edition* of the *Polyglot*, when he comes to treat of the *Samaritan Pentateuch*, seems very Zealous for it, and discourses in particular of this Passage of *A-Ben-Ezra*: He says truly, that there is no such Word as this *Asima* to be found in the *Samaritan Bible*, where the *Jew* pretends it is: That the latter *Samaritans*, after they had a Temple built for 'em on Mount *Gerizim*, were no longer *Idolaters*, but *Schismatics* only; and that the *Jews* by reason of their inveterate Hatred against 'em, use to load 'em with all the Calumnies imaginable, of which sort he takes this to be one. In Answer whereunto, with all the Deference possible to the Memory of so good and great a Man, we say in the first place, to his Objection, that there is Now no such word to be found in the *Samaritan*, we readily grant it, nor did *A. E.* ever affirm there was — We also as freely grant that the Second Cast of those *Samaritans* might not be *Idolaters*, (tho' our Saviour himself tells 'em, they knew not what they Worship'd) and yet still *A-Ben-Ezra's* Account may hold firm and good: For he says — the word *Asima* was found in the *Old Samaritan Bible*, tho' none doubts but when they afterwards came to Worship the true God, they wou'd abolish their Old Idols, and turn 'em out of their Bibles as well as their Temples; accordingly it might very easily be in the *Old Copie* and yet not to be found in the *New*. For the *Jews* slandering the *Samaritans*, we find by both Sacred and Profane History, that there was but little Love lost between 'em — however most of what *A. E.* accuses 'em of, is certainly true: 'Tis certain they were *Idolaters*, 'tis certain they Worship'd this *Asima*, and 'tis certain they Placed it in the Temple of God, and as well they might in his Word — and that they actually did so, carries with it a great Face of probability, and that *Mordecai* might know this, is very possible, he being about the Court, and no doubt constant Correspondence kept betwixt that and such famous Colonies, who

as it appears, still paid Tribute to the Kings of *Persia*, and receiv'd their Governours from them — and if he did know it, might very wisely and religiously endeavour to avoid giving Occasion for any such future Inconveniencies, and a better Account than this we doubt can hardly be found of this matter.

Let us add one Conjecture more concerning this *Asima*, which we know not whether any other has before fallen upon: 'Tis a known Objection against the *Jews* by the silly *Heathens*, that they Worship'd an *Ass* or *Asses Head* — *Asini* or *Asina Caput*: Now this mistake might have some ground in this *Idolatri* of the *Old Samaritans*, who Worship'd this *Asima*, which by a very small Change might be taken by one ignorant of the Language for the same with *Asina* an *Ass*, and one mistake often producing another, the same imputation be thrown on all the *Jews*, the *Samaritans* near Neighbours. Nor are such mistakes as these without a Preident among the *Heathen Writers*, when they speak of the *Jews*, who we know made bad Greek of the Hebrew word *Jerusalem*, and then understood it in as bad a sense, for a Name denoting *Sacrilege*; which tho' some *Christians* won't own to be a Sin, yet we may believe even a *Jew* wou'd never so far glory in it.

We design to Publish an Answer to the Questions lately sent us about *INFANT BAPTISM*, and therefore desire that all such as have any Doubts about it, speedily to send in their Objections.

The Paper of *Apparitions* will be Publish'd next Saturday, if therefore any of our Querists have any late Curious Instances on that Subject, they are desired to send 'em in, with the Places and Persons, by *Friday* next at farthest.

Our NEW PROPOSALS (concerning the Valuable Books Printed from the Year 65. to this present time) shall be inserted in next *Tuesday's Mercury*, (which will therefore for once be a whole sheet) together with the NAMES of some of those Books design'd.

Advertisements.

THE Preface, Index, and 12 Numbers that compleat the first 18 Numbers of our Third Volume, are now Publish'd all together, at 12 d. price, that so all those Gentlemen that took in the single Sheets from time to time might have their Third Volume entire for 2 s. 6 d. and also that those Coffee-houses that did the like might have the said Volume sticht up by them for the constant Entertainment of their Customers, single Sheets being apt to be lost, except pasted in a Book. In these 12 Numbers, and in the whole Third Volume now Publish'd, are Answer'd many of the Questions lately sent us. Printed for J. Duntton at the Raven in the Poultry.

THE SUPPLEMENT to the Third Volume of the *Athenian Mercury* will be Publish'd next *Friday*, containing an Account of the Design and Scope of the most considerable Books NEWLY PRINTED IN ENGLAND, and in the Foreign Journals, and of the Quality of the Authors, if known; with impartial Remarks upon their Undertaking and Performance. To which is added the Ingenious Conferences of the Foreign Virtuoso's upon many Nice and Curious Questions, many of which have been lately sent us.